

The Maryland Yellowthroat

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Connecting Birders with Birds: Meet the Marvelous Marcia Watson



MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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PAGE 7

FEATURE

Connecting Birders with Birds:
Meet the Marvelous Marcia Watson

PAGE 16

PHOTOS

Member Photos of Birds at Home
and Abroad

PAGES 12, 13

In This Issue

Editor's Note	2
President's Corner	3
Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership	5
Education Pavilion Named after Chan Robbins	6
Breeding Bird Atlas	7
Maryland/DC Records Committee Status Report	8
YMOS News	9
Chapter Chatter	10
Meet the Marvelous Marcia Watson	16
CALENDAR	20

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Illus. ©M.Suzanne Probst

Editor's Note

What an incredible start to the year we've had in Maryland. Our great state's first Black-chinned Hummingbird arrived in January (picture by George Jett on page 13) and many in the Maryland birding community have been given the opportunity to view it. The community owes a debt of gratitude to Jane Kostenko and Tyler Bell for organizing these visits and coordinating with the homeowners. Thank you, Jane and Tyler!

The Maryland Yellowthroat is now a quarterly publication. Please make note of the sponsor/material close dates, these are the deadlines for submissions.

The Maryland Yellowthroat Editorial Calendar

Issue: February. Sponsor/Material Close: January 15.

Issue: May. Sponsor/Material Close: April 1.

Issue: August. Sponsor/Material Close: July 1.

Issue: November. Sponsor/Material Close: October 1.

We appreciate your patience while we work out the best solution for the paper calendar. In the meantime, please visit MdBirds.org and check the online calendar for the most up-to-date information.

There's a lot to celebrate in this issue, especially one birder who has had such a tremendous impact on our community—Barbara Johnson interviews Marcia Watson on page 16.

Orietta C. Estrada, Editor
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Question about your mailing list preferences? Contact Maryanne Dolan at maryanne.dolan@gmail.com. Question about a calendar item? Contact Marilyn Veek at mveekmos@yahoo.com. Do you have a membership question? Contact Tom Strikwerda at webmaster@mdbirds.org.





A Birding Trip to Western Cuba: Endemics, Empty Roads, and Engaging People

We were fortunate to go on an MOS-arranged field trip to the western end of Cuba in mid November 2019. Thirteen of us (mostly MOS members) were led by Maryanne Dolan, while Holbrook Travel organized the itinerary and logistics and provided our Cuban guides. Holbrook were very thorough and made sure that our paperwork, especially our visas, were in order. Only group travel for special cultural/study purposes to Cuba is permitted.

We arrived at Havana's Hotel Sevilla on November 9 after a long drive through rainy, dimly-lit streets. The hotel had soaring ornate ceilings and the muted décor of yesteryear but reverberated to a band playing energetically near the front desk. Dining on the top floor was in an elegant setting reminiscent of past grand events while a quartet performed delightfully lively Cuban-theme music.



Cuban Tody. Image Credit: Hyacinth Todd.

Holbrook guides met us at the hotel the following morning. Alejandro Llanes Sosa would be our ornithologist and Osmin Rivero would take care of our non-birding needs. We then boarded our capacious bus, which was driven by the unflappable Eduardo. We spent Sunday morning birding the nearby botanic garden of Quinta de los Molinos (sadly it was mostly closed owing to the recent rain and the resulting danger of falling fronds) where we learnt to recognize the ubiquitous Red-legged Thrush and saw the first of many Cuban Emeralds (endemic or E), a gorgeous green hummingbird. Then on to the rocky, wind-blown Playa el Chivo. Here we enjoyed great views of a peregrine, sanderlings, a solitary sandpiper and other shore birds. For a change of pace, we spent the afternoon wandering through elegant, yet often crumbling, downtown Havana, with Osmin narrating the histories of the buildings we passed. A red morph Cuban resident (American) Kestrel landed on a gutter above us, its breast noticeably more rufous than North American birds.

The following day we headed west, out into green open country with few buildings and along nearly empty roads. We stopped to bird some cow pastures and were rewarded with our first views of Cuban Grassquits (E) as well as the more abundant Yellow-faced Grassquits. Here we also saw Cuban Green (E) and West Indian Woodpeckers for the first time; both are beautiful birds. Loggerhead Kingbirds perched on an overhead wire and a Cuban Pewee, with its distinctive pale sickle moon behind the eye, was seen well. At our next stop we saw a feeder with a frenzy of both

species of grassquits feeding. We were treated to the appearance of a Western Spindalis (regional endemic or RE)—a gorgeous bird, but a briefly-glimpsed Cuban Oriole (E) eluded most of the group. Stops near a fish hatchery yielded many water birds and some raptors, notably Crested Caracara and Snail Kite. Here and elsewhere we encountered Great Lizard Cuckoos (RE) which darted low from tree to tree, trailing their long tails. On a more prosaic note, the Turkey Vulture was the only species we saw every day. Clumsy Smooth-billed Anis were seen on several days.

As we approached the Valle de Vinales in Pinar Del Rio Province, the curious limestone hills known as mogotes appeared on the horizon; they could have been taken from a Tolkien novel. We stayed two nights at Hotel Rancho San Vicente. Here we learnt that wifi access in Cuba is not easy, guaranteed or cheap. Early the next morning we set off for Cueva de los Portales, a cave system where Che Guevara had his HQ during the 1962 Missile Crisis. We were joined by Cesar, a local guide who had an encyclopedic knowledge of the area's plants as well as its birds. We were treated to a Cuban Solitaire (E) singing beautifully high up in a tree top. We also saw more Cuban Emeralds, a lurking Cuban Trogon (E), and a glimpse of a Cuban Tody (E) (a little gem of a bird). In the afternoon we visited La Guira park for more birds and trees, including the Olive-capped Warbler (RE), which reminded me of the congeneric Yellow-throated Warbler. Later we visited the home of noted artist and conservationist, Nils Navarro, the author of 'Endemic Birds of Cuba'. Nils explained how he created this elegant book. He also



Cuban Green Woodpecker

briefed us on a scourge of Cuba's song birds: the trapping of males for the caged bird trade. This is seriously depleting populations but sadly the practice is still regarded as acceptable and not as being harmful to wild populations.

Throughout the trip we were entertained by tiny Antillean Palm Swifts that darted back and forth at great speed. They often nest in thatched roofs. Before our departure the next day, Nils led us to see a Giant Kingbird (E), which perched conveniently on a treetop, and a Scaly-naped Pigeon high in a pine tree.

We then began the long drive east to the Zapata swamp in Matanzas Province, punctuated by a typically generous Cuban style lunch and a visit to a tobacco farm with demonstrations of rolling cigars and crushing sugar cane. The country was open, green and delightfully rural. Upon arriving at Playa Larga we visited the home of a local man in whose backyard Bee Hummingbirds (E) and Cuban Emeralds (E) frequent his feeders and flowering trees. We had gorgeous close up views of these avian jewels. A Black-throated Blue Warbler hopped about nearby (one of 16 wintering warbler species seen or heard on the trip). We checked in at Hotel Playa Larga for three nights, had another robust dinner, and got an early night as Alejandro was committed to a 5:30am departure the next day.

We were on the road well before sunrise and reached Santo Tomas, deep in the Zapata swamp, soon after. With the aid of a local guide, we quickly saw a Zapata Sparrow (E) before following a rickety boardwalk to a canal where three boats and local men awaited us. Once in these boats, we were poled quietly further into the swamp. After playing the song of the Zapata Wren (E), we were thrilled when, eventually, one replied. Soon after, the bird alighted in a bush nearby and sang in full view. As our boats returned we were rewarded with a Yellow-headed Warbler (E) and a Cuban Bullfinch (RE). Memorable birds! After lunch we visited Las Salinas, on the Bay of Pigs, which has extensive mangrove swamps and large ponds reminiscent of South Florida. Here we saw many water birds, including Greater Flamingo, Roseate Spoonbill, White Ibis, American White and Brown Pelicans, Great Blue, Little Blue, and Tricolored Herons, Great and Snowy Egrets, distant West Indian Whistling Ducks, and Cuban Black Hawk (E).

As the evening sun sank, we got wonderful closer views of resident 'Cuban' Yellow and Prairie Warblers (the former a much richer deeper yellow than the migrant birds). Earlier in the trip, we had seen Eastern Meadowlarks and several of the group thought these were also noticeably more colorful than those in the US.

The next morning saw us again up well before dawn for we had to reach a special woodland glade before the sun's first rays. Here, aided by another local guide, we hid behind a purpose-built fence and waited. Soon we were rewarded by the appearance of three Blue-headed Quail-Doves (E), a Gray-fronted Quail-Dove (RE), and a couple of Zenaida Doves, one seen better later in a nearby tree. The birds walked towards us and began to forage quietly among the leaf litter. We marveled at these gorgeous birds. The former species is one of the first to disappear from areas where development occurs. Our next stop brought Red-shouldered (E) and Tawny-shouldered Blackbirds. Alejandro noted that the former is taxonomically close to our Red-winged Blackbirds, but is a very scarce bird compared with its northern cousin; the reason for this disparity is unknown. We also saw Cuban Blackbirds (E) on several days, which are common and widespread, unlike most of their fellow endemics. Later that day we saw a Cuban Pigmy-Owl (E) perched in a tree close to the road. It obligingly sat and watched us for many minutes.

That afternoon we searched in vain for the Fernandina's Flicker (E). But our local guide took us to a hollow dead tree in a wooded area, which he gently shook until a Bare-legged Owl (E) peeped out. We crept away to avoid flushing the bird, after a brief but delighted view.

We were invited to the Korimacao Community Project, a government-sponsored program to encourage high school and college age people to develop their talents in the visual and performing arts. After an overview by the project's director, backed by student artwork, we enjoyed performances by a small voice and percussion ensemble followed by a dance group.

The final endemic was a superb one. At dusk we travelled to a cattle pasture that was interspersed with low woods and bushes. After a few recorded calls, our guide suddenly pointed—there, crouched on a fence post was a Cuban Nightjar (E)! Apparently unfazed by the flashlight, it calmly stared back at us. This is a widespread and common, but rarely seen species, which has a marvelous call.

Over the course of the trip, our group saw or heard 128 species of birds, with 34 being regional endemics and 18 Cuban endemics.

General notes

There are two currencies in use; Cuban pesos for residents and Cuban convertible pesos (referred to as 'cuks'). Tourists have to use the latter. Credit cards are useless and US\$ are technically the least preferred currency (you are hit with a 13% reduction upon conversion). However US\$, are accepted as tips and in some tourist shops.

Public restrooms can be challenging and it is best to take your own toilet paper and be prepared to leave the attendant money (but it is money well spent).

Food is inexpensive and plentiful when dining out; lots of rice, beans, plantain, and meats, but very little in the way of green

vegetables. Their small bananas are delightfully sweet and flavorful. I can recommend the Crystal lager. Tipping is much appreciated.

Our weather was generally in the 80s, with no rain during most of our excursions, but planning for rain is a good idea.

Our Holbrook guides were first rate. Alejandro has great patience and a deep knowledge of Cuba's birds. Osmin, with his excellent command of English, entertained and enlightened us on Cuba's history, culture, economics and other matters. The local people we encountered were pleased to see our rumped group; one farmer even handed out cigars as we watched Eastern Meadowlarks on his land.

So, I urge you: go birding in Cuba and boldly brandish your bins to show Cubans how much their birds are appreciated! And keep an eye open for future MOS-arranged trips.

Best wishes for the New Year,



Robin G. Todd PhD

President, MOS



Bee Hummingbird

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Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership



La Plata becomes first Bird City Maryland applicant....and more from MBCP

Bird City Maryland (<https://birdcitymaryland.org/>) accepted its first application at the end of October. The Town of La Plata submitted their application the day after the Town Council passed and the Mayor signed a resolution supporting World Migratory Bird Day. We are excited about a few other communities who are actively working on their criteria to apply early next year! In addition to writing the *Feather Underground* blog, our new Sustainability Coordinator, Pamela Kellett, is assisting with Bird City activities. Check out our newly unveiled logo.

Have you checked out our *Feather Underground* blog lately? The second blog regales readers with the author's experience on a boat

trip with Sora whisperer Greg Kearns of the Patuxent River Park. If you know Greg, or especially if you don't, this is a most entertaining read! Check out *Feather Underground* at <https://marylandbirds.org/feather-underground>.

The second *Maryland Bird Symposium* was held Saturday, January 25, 2020, at the Patuxent National Wildlife Visitor Center in Laurel. Keynote speakers for the event were: Mike Parr, President of American Bird Conservancy, and Autumn-Lynn Harrison, manager of the Migratory Connectivity Project at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. We focused on a recent article in the journal *Science* that documents a 29% decline in North America's bird population since 1970. Visit <https://marylandbirds.org/2020-bird-conservation-symposium> more information.

All proceeds from the symposium went to the *Maryland Avian Research and Conservation (MARC) Fund for Youth* (<https://marylandbirds.org/about-the-marc-fund>). Our goal this year is to increase the Fund to \$10,000. This will allow us to work with youth on larger research, conservation, or community engagement projects in Maryland or anywhere one of Maryland's 143 Species of Greatest Conservation Need breed, migrate through, or winter. To do this, WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT! We challenge each MOS chapter to pledge \$100 to help Maryland youth take their passion for birds to the next level.

Chris Eberly director@marylandbirds.org



Education Pavilion at Patuxent to Be Named after Chan Robbins

An existing environmental education pavilion on the South Tract of Patuxent Research Refuge will be named “The Chandler S. Robbins Outdoor Education Center” to memorialize Chan’s lifelong commitment to conservation and environmental education. The pavilion will be enhanced with signage and displays honoring Chan’s lifework.

As many are aware, Chan, who passed away in 2017, was a world-famous ornithologist who was employed for most of his life at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. He was the lead author of the venerable *Birds of North America - A Guide to Field Identification* (aka *The Golden Guide*), as well as numerous scientific publications. He developed the protocols for the Breeding Bird Survey and the Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA), and was known for his landmark studies on the effects of forest fragmentation and pesticides and for his work on bird migration using bird banding.

Chan was also a leader within MOS from the organization’s earliest years: he served for three years as MOS President, for 50 years as a chapter director, and for 67 years as the Editor of *Maryland Birdlife*. Chan did much to promote the MOS sanctuary program, and after his death, his family donated to MOS the land in Garrett County that is now the Chandler and Eleanor Robbins MOS Sanctuary at Red Run. To read more about Chan’s contributions to MOS, see

the dedication penned by Jo Solem for MOS’s *Birder’s Guide to Maryland & DC*, online at <https://birdersguidemddc.org/about-us/dedication/>. Chan’s entire life and work are thoroughly documented in a memorial website maintained by the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center at <https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/robbins/index.cfm>.

The pavilion being named after Chan is an open-air structure located in a wooded area just northwest of the National Wildlife Visitor Center on South Tract (see photo). The pavilion is used for children’s education programs, but is in an area of the Refuge that is currently off-limits to the public. That will change once the trail leading to the pavilion is enhanced, and the new signage and interpretive displays are in place.

The Friends of Patuxent, Refuge staff, and the Robbins family are working together to develop plans for the signs and displays. The project is being funded through the Chandler S. Robbins Memorial Endowment Fund established by the Friends of Patuxent. The Friends of Patuxent invites contributions to the fund. If you wish to contribute, please send a check to: Friends of Patuxent, 10901 Scarlet Tanager Loop, Laurel, MD 20708, and indicate that your donation is for the Chandler S. Robbins Memorial Endowment Fund.

Marcia Watson

Breeding Bird Atlas

The Hummingbird's Nest

She buzzed to the feeder and hovered, sipping the sugar-water. She couldn't see her mate at the moment, but she knew he was nearby, actively defending this feeder from other hummingbirds—with more or less success. He had arrived almost a week before she had to claim this territory, and she approved of his choice. She had selected a nearby oak tree to build her nest in; there was a perfect little fork, almost 20 feet up, with overhanging leaves. These leaves would shade her from the sun during the day, and provide her with some insulation at night. Over the next week, she collected dandelion down, spider webbing, and pine sap, gradually building a cup around herself. She used her chin and chest in a pinching motion to create the nest lip, and placed fragments of lichen on the nest's exterior. She settled her 0.1-ounce body—less than the weight of a piece of paper—into the newly constructed cup. She would incubate two smooth, white eggs for the next two weeks.

From her vantage point, she could see everything that happened in the yard below. The Downy Woodpecker on the peanut feeder, the Gray Catbird carrying vegetation to line its nest with, the pair of Carolina Wrens who sang incessantly, and the people who replenished her preferred food source. They were busy—two young kids, a dog, a substantial garden—but they still found time each morning to drink their coffee on the porch and scan the backyard with binoculars.

They were looking for birds. More specifically, they were looking for breeding birds, like herself. They were part of a community science project documenting the distribution, abundance, and timing of the area's breeding birds. It was called the Maryland & DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3, and they were clearly enjoying it. They had signed up for a block—a 3 x 3 mile square—and were recording the behavior they observed each bird doing, using a series of codes. The Downy Woodpecker at the feeder was in habitat where it might breed, so it was a code H: in the right habitat; the Gray Catbird was carrying plant matter for its nest, so it was a code CN: carrying nesting material; and the Carolina Wren duet so busily singing was a code P: a male-female pair.

The data they were collecting would be combined with hundreds of other volunteers, and together these data would form a region-



wide map of where each species nested. This map could be linked with habitat to show where the most important nesting locations were; it could be compared to previous maps, and show whether populations were increasing or decreasing; it could even be used to show how the timing of nesting was changing. It was immensely valuable information.

She watched the couple follow a bright yellow, black-winged bird with their binoculars. It flitted into her oak tree.

"What is this yellow bird? Can you check the bird guide?" she heard him say.

"Where?! Oh there! Let me see.... A Yellow Warbler? No wait. They don't have black wings. A goldfinch? Oh totally! It's an American Goldfinch!"

"What a beauti—oh! Oh! Look at what I just found! See the fork in the oak tree, maybe 20 feet high?"

The woman looked up, scanning for the fork. "I think so... oh my gosh! It's a Ruby-throated Hummingbird! On a nest!"

The couple chattered on excitedly about their new find; the hummingbird ruffled her feathers and adjusted her eggs beneath her. For the Atlas, she would go down as one data point among millions, but, for this couple, she would remain an outstanding observation that would excite them all summer long.

If you would like to get involved with the Atlas, you can learn more on the website, ebird.org/atlasmdc, and on social media at @mddcbba3.

Gabriel Foley, MDDCBBA3 Coordinator

Save the Date!

MOS is proud to announce the 73th MOS convention to be held May 15 – May 17, 2020 at the Cumberland Ramada in Cumberland, Maryland. Please watch for future MOS newsgrams and updates to our convention website (<http://www.mosconvention.org>) for 2020 convention details.

This convention will be special because it will celebrate our **75th year as an organization**. MOS hopes to see you there!

Maryland/DC Records Committee Status Report

December 15, 2019

The Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee (MD/DCRC) reached the following record decisions since the latest committee status report was published in *The Maryland Yellowthroat*. This report covers MD/DCRC review package 182. MD/DCRC accession numbers are shown in brackets. These records will be addressed in additional detail in a future issue of *Maryland Birdlife*. There were no new “state” species for MD or DC in these decisions. The total number of species on the Official Lists of the Birds of MD and DC remain 453 and 341, respectively.

More information on the MD/DCRC can be found on the committee’s web page at the following URL:

<https://mdbirds.org/records-committee/>

MD Records Accepted:

King Eider, *Somateria spectabilis* [MD/2017-086] Brighton Dam, Brookeville, Howard and Montgomery Counties. 16-Dec-2017. Two first winter males.

Piping Plover, *Charadrius melodus* [MD/2019-068] Poplar Island, Sherwood, Talbot County. 23-Jul-2019 through 24-Jul-2019. One bird.

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus* [MD/2017-029] Peat Moss Road, Accident, Garrett County. 26-Jun-2017. One bird.

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus* [MD/2017-044] Mountain Farm, Mount Savage, Allegany County. 29-Jul-2017. One bird.

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus* [MD/2019-051] Violettes Lock, Seneca, Montgomery County. 23-May-2019. One bird.

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus* [MD/2019-088] Violettes Lock, Seneca, Montgomery County. 29-May-2019. Three birds.

Whimbrel (European), *Numenius phaeopus phaeopus* [MD/2011-158] Assateague Island National Seashore, Berlin, Worcester County. 10-May-2011. One bird.

Hudsonian Godwit, *Limosa haemastica* [MD/2018-063] Abingdon, Harford County. 21-Oct-2018 through 25-Oct-2018. One juvenile.

Least Tern, *Sternula antillarum* [MD/2015-042] Fulton Pond, Fulton, Howard County. 30-May-2015. Two adults.

Tropical Kingbird, *Tyrannus melancholicus* [MD/2019-064] Assateague Island National Seashore, Berlin, Worcester County. 15-Jul-2019. One bird.

Gray Kingbird, *Tyrannus dominicensis* [MD/2019-077] Swan Harbor Farm Park, Havre de Grace, Harford County. 27-Sep-2019. One bird.

Savannah Sparrow (Ipswich), *Passerculus sandwichensis princeps* [MD/1998-026] Cambridge Fishing Pier, Cambridge, Dorchester County. 19-Mar-1998. One bird.

Savannah Sparrow (Ipswich), *Passerculus sandwichensis princeps* [MD/2006-272] Poplar Island, Sherwood, Talbot County. 27-Nov-

2006. One bird.

Savannah Sparrow (Ipswich), *Passerculus sandwichensis princeps* [MD/2016-041] Poplar Island, Sherwood, Talbot County. 24-Nov-2015. One bird.

Seaside Sparrow, *Ammodramus maritima* [MD/2016-025] Ken-Gar Palisades Park, Kensington, Montgomery County. 26-May-2016 through 27-May-2016. One bird.

MD Records ID OK/Exotic:

Trumpeter Swan, *Cygnus buccinator* [MD/2019-045] Lakes Cove, Crapo, Dorchester County (also observed, in transit, in Charles, and, perhaps, Prince George’s Counties). 17-Dec-1997 through ~09-Mar-1998. Three immature females and two immature males. [Followed an ultralight aircraft from Arlie, VA.]

Trumpeter Swan, *Cygnus buccinator* [MD/2019-046] Wildfowl Trust of North America [now, the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center], Grasonville, Queen Anne’s County. 15-Dec-1998 through ~08-Mar-1999. Multiple (up to 18) immature birds involved. [Followed an ultralight aircraft from Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, NY.]

Trumpeter Swan, *Cygnus buccinator* [MD/2019-047] Wildfowl Trust of North America [now, the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center], Grasonville, Queen Anne’s County. (also observed, in transit, in Cecil County) 18-Jan-2001 through ~01-May-2001. Twelve (or eight?) birds. [Followed an ultralight aircraft from Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, NY.]

MD Records Not Accepted:

Least Tern, *Sternula antillarum* [MD/2019-062] Lake Elkhorn, Columbia, Howard County. 30-Jun-2019. One bird.

DC Records Accepted:

Nelson’s Sparrow, *Ammodramus nelsoni* [DC/2014-084] Anacostia, NE, Kenilworth Park, Kenilworth Park 29-Sep-2014 through 30-Sep-2014. One bird.

Taxonomy Changes. MD/DCRC data products have been updated to conform to the latest MOS taxonomy standard, the AOS North American Checklist, 60th Supplement, which was published in July 2019. Only a few of the 40+ changes directly affect our regional lists. Below is a summary of the regional changes:

1. White-winged Scoter Split. The Old-World Asian taxon [Stejneger’s Scoter *Melanitta stejnegeri*] and the Old-World European taxon [Velvet Scoter *M. fusca*] were split from our North American species. Our North American taxon retains the common name White-winged Scoter, however, its scientific species name changes to *M. deglandi*.

2. Common Ground Dove Name Change. Hypens were removed from the common names of all Ground Doves, therefore, *Columbina passerina* is now Common Ground Dove.

3. Storm-Petrel Genus Transfer. Some of our North Atlantic Storm-Petrels were transferred to another genus. Leach's Storm-Petrel is now *Hydrobates leucorhoa* and Band-rumped Storm-Petrel is now *Hydrobates castro*.

4. Dark-eyed Junco Placement. This taxon moved up, from a position following Spotted Towhee to follow American Tree Sparrow.

5. White-crowned Sparrow Placement. This taxon also moved up, from a position following Swamp Sparrow to now follow the

newly moved Dark-eyed Junco.

6. Oreothlypis Warbler Genus Split. The genus of *Oreothlypis* warblers was split and some were changed to *Leiothlypis*. Four of our regional species were affected: Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, and Virginia's Warbler. These species remain in the same list position, in the same order, but with the changed genus.

Phil Davis, MD/DCRC Secretary

YMOS News

Announcing the Annual YMOS Birdathon

March 21-22, 2020

The youngsters in the Youth Program of the Maryland Ornithological Society (YMOS) are already thinking spring. The annual YMOS Birdathon will take place just after winter has departed. The youth invite your pledges of \$0.25, \$0.50, or \$1.00 per species seen over their two days in the field. The shorelines, marshes, woods, and fields of Maryland's Eastern Shore will be stirring in the early days of the new season. But will they offer up at least 100 bird species?

The Birdathon is the principal fundraiser to underwrite expenses for representing the MOS in the World Series of Birding (WSB), the world's foremost birding competition organized by New Jersey Audubon, in early May. Our young birders really did well in 2019, winning every Division: Elementary, Middle School, High School, and Carbon-free kids (motorized vehicles not allowed). Birding skill notwithstanding, it is the cooperation and camaraderie that makes the YMOS so special. These young birders are super ambassadors of the MOS and you.

The Birdathon is not just an attempt to run up a species list. In addition to the challenges posed by the weather and the birds

themselves (90% of the participants must see or hear each species recorded), the youngsters construct an advance list of 100 "Must-See" species. The list is always a mixture of easy and difficult species and there has never been a Birdathon in which all Must-See's were seen. Their final results require that they record two additional species to make up for any Must-See miss. Overcoming all these challenges requires planning and decision-making coupled with a high level of collaboration and sharing.

You can pledge any time prior to the Birdathon by emailing George Radcliffe (radclifg@gmail.com) or Wayne Bell (wbell2@washcoll.edu). Those who pledge will receive an advance copy of the Must-See list. After the Birdathon, you will receive a report of all species identified and the amount you owe based on the net species total after any penalty deductions for Must-See misses. And will someone please direct any Gray Catbirds to the Eastern Shore in March; this has become our nemesis species.

Thank you in advance for your encouragement of this remarkable group of youngsters and, of course, the parents and coaches who rise early and drive long hours to make it all happen. In the end, it is all about having fun together.

George Radcliffe and Wayne Bell

Know a Youth Birder?

Hidden around the state are young people with a passion for nature, the outdoors, and birds. Likely they know of no one in their school or neighborhood with an equal passion, and that interest often fades as they mature. Please connect them with the YMOS group, where they can join youth with a similar passion. That child often feels like an "oddball" as their interest may run counter to what most of their peers are doing, but in YMOS, they can share and learn with peers sharing their interest. There is no "joining" YMOS; just show up on one of our regular trips around the state. There is no charge for any trip, and we can lend binoculars and field guide to any interested student. Our youth range from age 7 on up, and parents/families are always welcome.

Interested students can contact George Radcliffe at radclifg@gmail.com for more information. Trips and related information are found in the Young Birders section of the MOS website (mdbirds.org). You can make a difference in a young person's life by connecting them with this fabulous and talented group of Maryland youth.

Make this a New Year's resolution, to search out that child in your area with the same passion as you.

BALTIMORE**Costa Rica Trip**

Thirteen Maryland birders, mostly members of the Baltimore Bird Club or other MOS chapters, visited Costa Rica during April 20 - 29, 2019. The trip was organized by *Kevin Graff* and guided by Mario Cordoba of Crescentia Expeditions. To take advantage of a nonstop flight from BWI airport on Saturdays, we flew to San Jose a day early and thus had more time to bird in the gardens at the Hotel Bougainvillea. Kevin led us through the gardens on the first day and identified various birds for us.

Areas visited included Arenal Volcano and Lodge, Cerro Lodge, Carara National Park, the Tarcoles River, the Savegre Valley, the Talamanca Mountains and Site KM70 (described in Barrett Lawson's guidebook). Throughout the trip we were impressed by Mario's ability to find hard-to-see birds and get them in the spotting scope for us. He was also able to use his birding contacts to get us to a place where a pair of Resplendent Quetzals was nesting. We also had a group full of good spotters.

We had a diverse group of birders with a variety of interests, so each person no doubt had their own highlights and favorites. As first-time birders in Costa Rica, some of Linda's and my highlights included the Black-and-White Owls, the Thicket Antpitta and the Great Potoo near the Arenal Lodge, the variety of Hummingbirds at the Hummingbird Observatory, the Scarlet Macaws at Cerro Lodge, the Boat-billed Herons and three different Wrens at Carara National Park, the Turquoise-browed Motmot, Magnificent Frigatebirds and Bare-throated Tiger-Heron on the Tarcoles River boat trip, Acorn Woodpecker, Flame-colored Tanager and American Dipper in the Savegre Valley, and a pair of Resplendent Quetzals at Site KM70. After waiting over an hour for the male Quetzal to appear, getting some good photos was a nice way to end the trip.

At the farewell dinner Kevin reported that we had over 330 species for the trip. The group thanked him for his efforts in organizing the trip, answering questions and serving as a guide on arrival day. *Jim Highsaw and Linda Prentice (See page 12 for photos Turquoise-browed Mot Mot.)*

CARROLL COUNTY**Trip to Patuxent River Park: A Sora Experience, and More**

Have you ever met Greg Kearns? If you have, you know how dedicated he is to preserving habitat for birds, particularly the sora rail, at the Patuxent River Park Jug Bay Natural Area. Members of the Carroll County Bird Club found out how enjoyable and informative he can be when we joined members of the Baltimore County Bird Club on a BCBC-arranged trip to the Park. September 21 was a beautiful day, with weather much milder than expected. As Greg piloted the pontoon boat through the calm waters of the Patuxent at Jug Bay, he talked with us excitedly about the recent radio telemetry project that he has been conducting to track soras on their yearly migration.

Greg has been tracking the movement of soras on and off for many years. New technology has now enabled the development

of transmitters small enough to be fitted on soras, and extended battery life allows tracking a given transmitter for up to 400 days. Over time, throughout the US and beyond, monitoring towers have been built to enable tracking larger birds; now that soras can be fitted with transmitters, their movements too can be monitored, and the opportunity to learn about their migratory patterns has substantially increased. With money donated from a private source, Greg has been able to fit more than 50 birds with the transmitters, and tracking has begun.



The pontoon boat was a pleasant way to move across the water, and it was comfortable for birdwatching and listening to Greg talk about his experiences over his many years as a Park naturalist. But the focus of the trip was really to see first-hand what is now happening at the Park with the soras. There are a series of rail traps, which Greg designed and improved over the years, located in the marsh grasses lining the river. At a number of points during our trip, Greg pulled the boat in close to water's edge, where the traps had been placed out of sight in the grasses. His graduate assistant Kyra donned wader overalls, stepped off the boat and onto the slatted "paths" to the traps, and disappeared into the marsh to see if any birds had been caught overnight. While we waited, everyone on the boat peered into the grass to look for soras. We listened carefully for their calls, trying to distinguish between the birds themselves and the recordings that Greg uses to attract them to the traps. If there were none, Greg slapped the water with a paddle or made other loud noises—a process that sometimes flushes them or at least causes them to call. He also used a hand-held monitoring device and, if a bird called, he could point out approximately where it was and even tell us by name (well, number, really) which bird it was. Very impressive!

At some of the stops we did see soras, along with such other denizens as marsh wrens, Carolina wrens, and red-winged blackbirds. Some of us saw one or two soras, others saw many more. Regardless of the number, it was rewarding to see the little birds tripping through the grasses.

Rewarding, yes—but not nearly as exciting as each time the assistant walked gingerly back to the boat, carrying the specially designed box that is used to bring back birds found in the traps, and gave the "thumbs up" to let us know a bird was in the box! Greg gave everybody on the boat the opportunity to hold one of the little rails. Worrying that I would squeeze it too hard and cause it harm, I politely declined the chance. But others, braver than I, couldn't resist, and there were many happy birders holding a rail for the first time! You can see from this picture that Dave Harvey took that at least this rail, though not obviously "happy", didn't seem to be too terribly distressed. Who knows what one would have looked like had that been my hand in the picture!

There was more to be done at these stops, though, than just pass a bird around. Greg and Kyra weighed each bird they caught,

measured its tarsus, recorded the measurements, and then banded the bird. Greg did not fit any of the birds we saw with the transmitters. He prefers to use only birds of a certain weight (about 60 grams), and these birds generally weighed less. In addition, to protect the bird, the fitting is only done inside a building. He did, though, show us a transmitter, and he explained how the harness that holds it fits around the bird. It was hard to imagine a bird that small carrying a backpack!

While seeing the soras was the highlight of the trip, we did see a number of other birds: lots of wood ducks and great egrets, and even an American bittern who flew obligingly close as it passed the boat. Of course, there were great blue herons; Jo Morrison shared this photo of one of the graceful birds we glimpsed on our trip.

As we made our way back to shore, Greg told us about another part of the project that will help not only him but others tracking migratory birds. Recent research has shown that many birds—certainly more than previously imagined—actually wind up in Bermuda as a stopping point on their migration. No one knows exactly which birds wind up there and why, because there has been no way to track migratory birds on the island. Until now, that is! Greg and his team, using a donation from a private foundation, planned and then executed the erecting of a monitoring tower in Bermuda this past summer. He shared stories about the process and some of the practical difficulties they faced. He also described the damage to the tower that Hurricane Humberto inflicted, just months after the tower was raised. Fortunately, while the antenna was damaged, the damage did not appear to have affected its workability, so tracking should continue as expected until they can repair the tower.

Greg shared lots of information with us, but one item was an unexpected and welcome bit of information about an invasive species that grows in the marshes. Most of us know it as mile-a-minute vine, but Greg and his colleagues prefer to call it “tear-thumb”, a reference to the almost razor-sharp stems that can result in painful fingers if the plant is handled carelessly. Mile-a-minute stands are usually not a pleasant sight. However, it turns out that the vines actually fruit after most of the other plants have stopped fruiting, and Greg told us it also turns out that many birds enjoy the fruits! This means that visiting birds can get nourishment even after the fruits and seeds of the native plants have disappeared—a happy circumstance in the face of an otherwise unhappy invasion of non-natives.

After the enjoyable and informative boat trip, many of the group joined in a bird walk around the Park. I was not able to participate, but the eBird list I later saw told me the walk was definitely a positive adjunct to the main activity of the morning. CCBC members thank the BCBC and staff of the Patuxent River Park for making the trip available to us.

Back to my question at the beginning: Have you ever met Greg Kearns? If the answer is no, I suggest you get down to Patuxent River Park and seek him out. Whether you’ve met him or not, however, you are invited to the next meeting of the CCBC, on December 4, when Greg will be giving all our members a talk about this exciting

project he’s undertaking and how it’s going so far. We’ll be happy to see you in Westminster, and you’ll be happy you came! *CJ McAuliffe* (See photos on page 12 of a Great Blue Heron and a Sora.)

CECIL COUNTY

Africa

In March *Ken* and *Kimberleigh Drier* joined up with Overseas Adventure Travel for three weeks in Kenya and Tanzania on safari. After a 14 hour non stop flight from JFK in New York they arrived in Nairobi, Kenya. For Ken the birding started right at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi while waiting for the shuttle to the hotel. Pied Crow and Red-winged Starlings were the first birds to be noted. A relaxing first day around the hotel pool in the middle of town getting over the stress of jet lag produced such marvels as the Variable Sunbird, Spectacled Dove, Marabou Stork, Spectacled Mousebird, White-browed Sparrow Weaver and several others.

The next day the group, nine persons in all, took a small plane out to Masai Mara for the first real adventure. Leaving the airport which was a dirt strip with a picnic shelter Ken spotted the turkey sized Southern Ground Hornbill strutting across the plains. Kim and Ken were there with their Maasai guide George, who wore his traditional tribal clothing, for four days. By the second day the group had already found the so called Big 5. This consists of the lion, leopard, elephant, black rhino and Cape Buffalo. Besides the Big 5, the group was treated to 5 cheetahs out on a hunt, a cheetah mom with 4 Cubs. The group was not particularly into birds. While everyone would be snapping napping lions with their cameras Ken was finding White-bellied Bustards, beautiful Lilac-breasted Rollers, Greater Blue-eared Starlings and several more birds with colors in their names.

Next up was Lake Nakuru National Park. The group stayed nearby on the water at Lake Elmenteita. Flamingos, African Spoonbills and Purple Grenadiers were highlights seen from the cabin porch. Lake Nakuru was productive with three more Black Rhinos, Saddle-billed Stork, both Red and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers on the backs of buffalos, Green Wood-hoopoe and the long tailed African Paradise Flycatcher, one of Kim’s favorites from a previous trip to South Africa.

Heading into Tanzania going toward Amboseli National Park, Mount Kilimanjaro could clearly be seen in the distance. The snow capped peak was the focal point of Kim and Ken’s view from their tent while at Amboseli. This park is known for its elephants and they did not disappoint. Several large family groups were observed moving across the plains and swampy areas. Kim’s favorites were the babies which could be found playing in the water and then mud. Gray-crowned Cranes, Meyer’s or Brown Parrots, Little Bee-eaters, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, Blue-capped Cordonbleu and two species of Firefinch convinced the group that they needed to pay attention to the birds as well as hippopotamus. Cameras began turning up into the trees for pictures and Ken obliged giving names to all that they were seeing.

Tarangire National Park hosts the largest concentration of breeding

M E M B E R P H O T O S



Turquoise-browed Motmot. Image Credit: Jim Highsaw.



Harpy Eagle. Image Credit: Bill Adams.



Sora. Image Credit: Dave Harvey.



Great Blue Heron. Image Credit: Jo Morrison.

Submit Your Photos!

For more information visit:

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M E M B E R P H O T O S

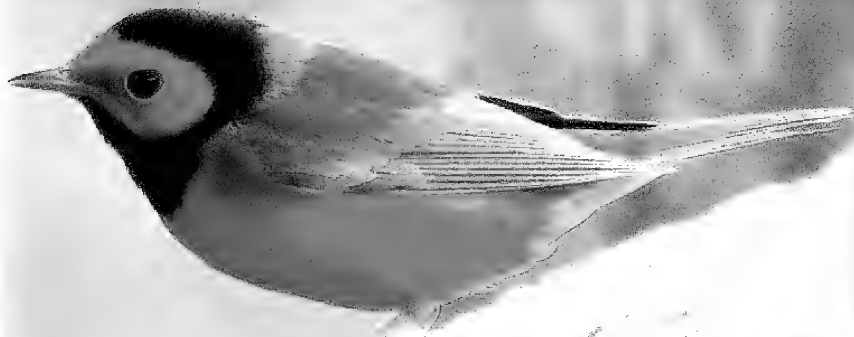


D.H. Michael Bowen contributed the following photos on this page:

Winter Wren (Great Falls, Montgomery County, Maryland. 11/19) Top.

Hooded Warbler (male) (Indian River County, Florida, 10/19) Center.

Limpkin with apple snail (Osceola County, Florida, 10/19) Bottom.



George Jett capture this stunning image of Maryland's FIRST Black-chinned Hummingbird. Top-right. Image: George Jett.



bird species of any place in the world. The rest of the wildlife was pretty spectacular as well. The day started with 10 lions feasting on a Buffalo carcass while the giant White-backed Vultures sat silently in the Baobab trees. These birds are twice the size of Turkey and Black Vultures. Families of elephants gathered at the waterholes to cool off and play. They were joined by the African Jacana, Blacksmith Plovers, Scared and Hadada Ibis and Black-headed Herons. Large herds of zebras stampeded into the lake and a Tawny Eagle kept watch. As did the four foot long Monitor Lizards.

The UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Ngorongoro Crater was the next stop. This is a huge volcanic crater about 1500 feet high that houses a whole Noah's ark array of African animals from Black Rhinos, to hippos, to elephants and gazelles and then of course birds. African Fish Eagle, flocks of both Greater and Lesser Flamingos, as well as both the spectacular Superb and Hildebrandt's Starlings were some of what was found. As the group made their way down into the crater a Secretary-bird was out hunting and seen catching a mouse and eating it. The Kori Bustard is the heavyweight of the avian world. Weighing up to 35 pounds it is the heaviest of all flying birds. One bustard performed for the group prancing about all puffed up in its breeding plumage similar to our prairie chickens. Everyone was a birder now.

The finale was four days in the Serengeti. Kim and Ken were tenting in the Mbugani Camp in the middle of the plains. Serengeti means endless plains in the Swahili language. There were places where from horizon to horizon there would be no trees or bushes in sight but at the same time one could view thousands of wildebeest, zebras and impalas. Three species of cuckoos, Fischer's Lovebirds and a great variety of thirteen eagles, harriers and vultures kept things interesting. The last three nights armed guards were needed to escort the group back and forth from the tents to the dinning hall as hippos, buffalo and lions wandered through the camp after dark.

Kim was hoping to see baby elephants on the trip and she did. She also was able to watch a baby Thompson's Gazelle being born and taking its first steps, baby giraffes and lion and cheetah cubs as well. Ken was hoping to see 200 species of birds. It was a good estimate. He tallied 198 with 105 being life birds. It was an experience to be relived for a long time and never to be forgotten. *Ken Drier*

HARFORD COUNTY

Exploring Costa Rica

On 1 July 2019, *Mark Johnson* marshaled together the following HBC spouses and friends: *Denise Johnson, Susan and Bob Hood, Suzanne and Larry Procell*, Maya and John Paul, and *Tom Congersky/Bob Werrlein* (the odd couple). With binocs and cameras in tow, and target-species in mind, we boarded Southwest Air, and headed off to explore the birds and natural wonders of Costa Rica. In San Jose we met Max Vindas, an exceptionally gifted naturalist and photographer, appointed by Horizontes Nature Tours to assure the success of our adventure. After a quick lunch at a roadside "Sodas" we headed northeast on Guapiles Highway driving up into the Central Cordillera. The twists and turns of the winding road occasionally provided spectacular views of waterfalls, and of

lush rain and cloud forests contained in the open hollows of these rugged volcanic mountains. At dusk we arrived in Braulio Carrillo National Park where we deployed for a brief time to stretch our limbs, and commune with the indigenous life-forms inhabiting this vast (185 sq. mi) wilderness. Almost immediately, the shadowy form of a White-nosed Coati crossed our path and vanished in the jungle undergrowth. In the leafy canopy above, 3 Keel-billed Toucans, 2 Collared Aracari, and a Yellow-throated Toucan bounced about restlessly seeking suitable perches for the night ahead. Meanwhile, a nearby Wedge-billed Woodcreeper was busy foraging for an end-of-day snack. In the fading light of our solar day, Max led us to an open woodland thicket to experience the audio-visual "zooming" activity of forest hummingbirds. In all, 5 species: Rufous-tailed, Violet-headed, Snowcap, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, and Stripe-throated Hermit were engaged in an aerobatic cotillion of in-and-out, to-and-fro feeding among limited but concentrated clusters of wild flowers. Much later, on a dark jungle trail, a guttural sounding "wk-wk-wuUurr" helped us to locate a majestic Crested Owl overhead in full-frontal view showing its long, white, conspicuous V-shaped ear tufts. Playing "Hide and Seek" among the large, moist plant leaves, and along the forest floor, we uncovered a mating pair of Red-eyed Tree Frogs (a target species), a translucent-looking Tink Frog, a Vine snake, and a veritable parade (200+ meters long) of Leaf-cutter ants hauling clipped vegetation to be composted in their fungus farms for feeding the entire colony.

On day 2 (first full day in CR), 2 Crested Guan, a Laughing Falcon, and a Great Potoo, graced our way to La Pavona (a maritime port) where we boarded a "Panga" (an outboard-powered water taxi) and headed to Tortuguero, one of the most remote, wildlife-rich areas in CR. The breathtaking biodiversity along these serpentine, riparian waterways was raw nourishment for the soul, and pure, savory input for our cameras. We saw: Green Ibis. Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Spider monkeys, Anhinga, Spectacled caiman, Rufous Motmot, White-faced Capuchin, Great Green Macaw (endangered), Scarlet Macaw, Little Blue Heron, King Vulture, Ringed Kingfisher, Montezuma's Oropendola, Green Iguana, Russet-naped Wood Rail, Slaty-tailed Trogon, etc. etc., recording 74 bird species on day 2; and 297 during our 10 days of travel. Arguably, the "bird of this trip" a Resplendent Quetzal was seen by all, and photographed (many times) from a cafe balcony on a rainy day in Savegre, Los Santos. Thank you Max Vindas.

Please note: There is unbridled pleasure in stating that we have been witness to CR's wildlife conservation, and commitment to ecotourism. Everyone should try it, at least once. *Bob Werrlein*

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Bill Adams sent this trip report and photo: "During July of this year I took a VENT tour to the Choco Region of Colombia led by the famed author of guides to Colombia and also Venezuela, Steve Hilty. It was co-led by Colombian guide, Cristian Daza, of Manakin Tours. The Choco region is known for its regional endemics and is one of the wettest and least visited and most coveted regions in the American Tropics. Those birds that I saw included the Sooty-capped Puffbird, Dusky Pigeon, Tooth-billed Hummingbird, Brown Wood-

Rail, Rose-faced Parrot, Black-tipped Cotinga, Stub-tailed Antbird and Baudo Oropendola. But surely the highlight of the trip occurred while I was resting in my cabin and my next door neighbor shouted, "Bill, you better get out here!" And amazingly, right above our cabin, was a Harpy Eagle perched in full view. Everyone hurried over to see it but that turned out to be unnecessary as it remained on that perch for at least 30 minutes allowing for multiple photos. It was holding a partially eaten Mantled Howler Monkey in its talons. Spectacular!" (See page 12 for a photo of a Harpy Eagle.)

TALBOT COUNTY

Talbot County Birding Fun at the Roslund Home

Wednesday morning, Nov 13th, a family group of two adult Black Vultures and one juvenile were seen quietly perched on a horizontal branch of a large River Birch tree close to our house beside Leeds Creek. The young bird had hatched this year in a 100-year-old wooden barn on our property. We had seen him with the female (Mom) regularly for the past six weeks. As the three basked in the sun, a local Bald Eagle swooped down to the site carrying a partly eaten fresh fish. The eagle, with fish, lit on the muddy (low tide) shore line about 30 feet from the vultures and continued to take a few more bites from this breakfast delicacy. In a few minutes, the Eagle, perhaps filled with enough fish, flew up to a familiar feeding perch high in a large Oak tree about fifty yards from the fish carcass. Within less than a minute the three vultures dropped from their perch, coasted to the remnants of the carcass, and made short work of it, leaving no sign of the fish or eagle having ever been there. The only thing they left behind was the set of vulture footprints and some scratch marks in the mud.

My wife, Carolyn, and I had watched the entire sequence of these events. Other witnesses included a newly arrived group of 32 migrant Canada Geese and a single Great Blue Heron. I had heard the geese arrive during the previous night. Their vocalization and behavior differed from that of the 400 other geese that have been loitering on Leeds Creek since early November. During the vulture clean up activity, the 32 geese swam silently past in single file, looking on the scene as if they had never previously seen vultures in such activity. The heron had stared silently from the far side of the creek. He seemed to be making it clear that he preferred to eat only the live fish from this creek that he had caught himself, and had absolutely no interest in competing for trashy remnants left by an eagle. What really happened here? Was this eagle doing breakfast delivery for the vultures? Was this a special gift to welcome the coming out of this darling little vulture? Or why on earth did the eagle go to the trouble of flying to our shoreline from where ever the fish had been caught? Most likely we will never know. After the vultures left, the eagle left also, leaving us to revel in the joy of just another happy autumn birding experience here in beautiful Talbot County. *Les Roslund, Easton, MD*

TRI-COUNTY

In July, *Bob and Marcia Balestri* went to New Mexico and Arizona for a little birding and to visit family and friends. In Tucson, they met with former MOS member, Mick Welsh, to scour southeast

Arizona for a few life birds like Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Mexican Whip-poor-will, and Buff-collared Nightjar as well as more of those lovely western birds.

At the end of August, *Marcia Balestri* joined *Kathy Calvert* in Alaska for an 18-day trip with Wings to the Pribilofs and Gambell. They arrived a few days early in Nome to bird that area before joining the group. Kathy picked up many new birds including Emperor Goose and Bristle-thighed Curlew, and Marcia added Arctic Warbler and Steller's eider to her list. First stop on the tour was Gambell where slogging through the "lettuce" was a little tough in the beginning, but rewarding in the end with White Wagtail, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Brambling, and Red-throated Pipit. At the sea watch they saw steady streams of Alaskan specialties such as Parakeet, Least, and Crested Auklets, Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels, and Short-tailed Shearwaters. Due to weather, they were stranded an extra day on Gambell, but were able to travel the next day to Anchorage where they picked up Willow and White-tailed Ptarmigan. On to the Pribilofs where they were treated to good looks at Jack Snipe, Gray-tailed and Wandering Tattler, and Red-legged Kittiwake.

Marcia Balestri

Marylee Ross and Paul Bystrak went "Leaf Peepin" in the northern Adirondacks in early October. Half the time was spent at Asgaard Farm, an organic goat dairy, in a nice guest house on the farm grounds. It was interesting to see that the bird flock seen each day in the field close to the porch consisted of chipping sparrows, pine warblers and bluebirds, the same mix they see from their porch in Salisbury each day. In both places, there was one phoebe mixed in as well. It seemed odd to see so many pine warblers near the northern edge of their range. Oh, and the leaves were nice, too! *Paul Bystrak*

The Tri-County Club's October field trip to Assateague National Seashore was featured on WBOC's Sunday Morning News on Nov. 17. *WBOC Chief Meteorologist, Dan Satterfield*, who recently joined the club, presented an enthusiastic review of the trip, which included interviews with club president *Mike Walsh* and member *Marcia Balestri*. Dan called the trip a "real eye opener" which introduced "a whole world of wildlife" he had been previously missing. He called Delmarva "One of the best places anywhere to observe birds" and encouraged folks to check out their local bird club. Thanks, Dan, and we look forward to you participating in future club trips! *Ellen Lawler*

WASHINGTON COUNTY

First Year Birding and Thanks

I declared myself a novice birder when I purchased binoculars for myself last Christmas. My desire was to be more physically active, and I've admired birds for a long time; so what could be a better combination? Birding gave me an excuse to get outdoors. I had no idea at the time how much this new hobby would enrich my life.

In the dead of winter, I enhanced my backyard birding experience by adding additional feeders to the one I already had. I especially wanted to attract woodpeckers and provide a feeder exclusively for the goldfinches that always seemed put off by larger birds. With four

feeding stations in the yard, I could provide a variety of foods to attract the local bird population. My little suburban yard attracted the usual backyard birds: cardinals, blue jays, chickadees, titmice, wrens, robins, finches, downys, red-bellies, nuthatches, juncos, and sparrows. Warm weather added catbirds to the mix. What I didn't notice, however, were the occasional migrants passing through. I didn't even know to look for them.

I never thought I would see a warbler, but two Magnolia Warblers visited my yard for half a day in the Spring. I was elated! Then on my own I also "discovered" Yellow Warblers and Yellow-rumped Warblers at a nearby park. And in the fall a Black and White Warbler and a Northern Parula visited my bird bath, along with a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, several days running.

Throughout the year I was privileged to join some bird walks led by members of Potomac Valley Audubon Society and Washington

County Bird Club (where I am now a member). In every case I got to see birds that were firsts for me: Eastern meadowlarks, green herons, blue-gray gnatcatchers, northern parulas, ovenbirds, thrushes and thrashers, phoebes, bluebirds, kestrels, wood pewees, killdeer, belted kingfishers and red-eyed vireos, to name a few. These outings taught me where to look, and I began to find some of these species and many others during my solitary outings.

These walks with knowledgeable birders have been instrumental to my growth and pleasure in birding as a hobby. They taught me to see with new eyes. Because of this, I want to give a shout-out to these great people for their kindness, generosity and patience: Deb Hale of Potomac Valley Audubon Society, and these folks from Washington County Bird Club: *Larry Zalesky, Doris Berger, Mark and Heather Abdy, Bruce and Linda Field, Anna Hutzell, Shirley Ford*. Each of you has made my first year of birding memorable and special. Thank you! *Susan Haberkorn*

Connecting Birders with Birds: Meet the Marvelous Marcia Watson

Marcia Watson, President of the Patuxent Bird Club, talks with Barbara Johnson about her entry into MOS and the new Birder's Guide to Maryland & DC website.

<https://birdersguidemddc.org/>

Marcia Watson's seemingly innumerable contributions to MOS include a comprehensive pictorial history of MOS sanctuaries, and a relaunch of the online Birder's Guide to Maryland and DC. We asked about her background and her extensive volunteer work with MOS.

Marcia's father sparked her childhood interest in nature, taking her for long walks and on hunting trips, where she learned to identify waterfowl. During summer vacations in Stone Harbor, NJ, they would visit an enormous tern rookery by day, and at dusk watched as scores of birds roosted in the refuge.

From the University of Delaware, Marcia earned a BA in psychology and a PhD in biological sciences. Joining UDE's faculty, she taught courses including human physiology, and conducted research. Volunteering for a child care agency in Newark, she honed her administrative skills. She served as assistant provost at UDE for six years, then worked in Student Advisement, visiting every Delaware high school each year. In 2010 she moved to the provost office of the University of Maryland University College. She retired in 2015.

A newspaper column by Gary Griffith attracted Marcia to a group of birders that would become the Cecil Bird Club (CBC). When CBC joined the state organization in 1994, Marcia's long membership in MOS began.

Marcia met Gene Scarpulla (Editor of *Maryland Birdlife*) while birding at Conowingo Dam. Later, unbeknownst to them both, they were assigned to co-lead an MOS Conference field trip by a match-making Janet Shields. Janet's hunch paid off: Marcia and Gene married in 2017. Marcia has an adult son who lives with his wife in Japan.

Currently, you serve the Patuxent Bird Club as president and

webmaster. What was your first MOS volunteer effort? I was a founding member of the CBC. I succeeded Gary Griffith to become the second CBC president, and automatically became a member of the Board of Directors of MOS and began to attend the quarterly meetings. I have served on the Scholarships Committee, the Long-Range Planning Committee (including a term as chair), the Budget Committee; and the MD/DC Bird Records Committee. I have to tell you, I was eager to get involved on the state level with MOS. Very early in my birding career, someone gave me a copy of the *Yellowbook (Field List of the Birds of Maryland)*, and I was very impressed with that publication. It seemed to me the publication represented an incredible amount of shared knowledge within MOS, and I wanted to be part of that.

You presented a marvelous pictorial history of the MOS Sanctuaries to every MOS chapter. What inspired you to take on this project?

Several things came together as an inspiration for that project. The immediate impetus came at the MOS retreat in 2017. The discussions there had a couple of recurring themes: the desire to develop a few "canned" slide shows that could be shared with the chapters; the need to develop a management plan for the sanctuaries; and the need to better publicize the resources that MOS has to offer. In listening to the comments about the sanctuaries, it became immediately apparent that most of the participants at the retreat weren't prepared to make decisions about the future of the sanctuaries, because they didn't know much about them. For example, most were only aware of Carey Run and/or Irish Grove. People had no idea that, at the time, there were nine MOS sanctuaries spread all over the state. I was aware of the existence of the other sanctuaries, because that early version of the *Yellowbook* had a list of all the sanctuaries in it. Could we have some way of sharing information about the sanctuaries with a wide audience? I remembered that Paul Bystrak, as a member of the Cecil Chapter in the 1990's, had given presentations at a couple of chapter meetings about the sanctuaries; his intent was to cover them one by one. But

he moved out of state before he could complete the series. So I thought that Paul's idea could be resurrected and that a slideshow on all the sanctuaries could serve several purposes for MOS. With my background in higher education, I had many years of experience in designing and delivering presentations, so this was right up my alley. I had never been a member of the Sanctuary Committee, but I knew from reports at the Board meetings that the committee members were always up to their ears in maintenance needs at Carey Run and Irish Grove, so I joined the committee with the expressed intent of focusing on publicity for the sanctuaries.

Tell us about creating and delivering the presentation.

The most fun part was reading through 60+ years of *Maryland Birdlife* to research the history of the sanctuaries. Initially, I tried just searching for "sanctuary" using the CD-ROM version of *Birdlife* or the version online at SORA (<https://sora.unm.edu/node/132691>), but I quickly realized I was missing a good deal of material with that method. Fortunately, because my husband Gene serves as Editor of *Maryland Birdlife*, we have a complete printed set of the journal at home, so I started reading through the printed copies, page by page, to glean the bits and pieces of how the sanctuaries came to be. The challenge was to stay on point: I came across many tantalizing articles that had nothing to do with the sanctuaries, and I would call out to Gene: "Look at this!" I remember one of the intriguing articles concerned an attempt by Patuxent Bird Club member Woody Martin to wade into a wetland to document breeding by Common Gallinule in Prince George's County. But I had to set that article and others aside, to be enjoyed at a later date.

In addition to reading *Maryland Birdlife*, the *Yellowthroat*, and other published materials, I also reached out to Sanctuary Committee members and to other members of MOS to request photos and facts and anecdotes about the sanctuaries, and many people responded: Dominic Nucifora, Brent and Mary Byers, Jan Reese, Danny Poet, Gemma Radko, Sue Ricciardi, Paul Bystrak, Wayne Bell, Dotty Mumford, and probably more that I am forgetting. A very enjoyable part of the putting the presentation together was that it really represents the contributions of a wide spectrum of MOS members, and of course it portrays the work of many people at the sanctuaries themselves. When reading about the sanctuaries in *Birdlife*, I was extremely impressed with the commitment and dedication of the MOS members who have made the sanctuaries a reality. The fundraising alone has been an incredible accomplishment.

The biggest challenge in developing the presentation was the fact that I had WAY too much material. It was very difficult to whittle the presentation down to a reasonable length to fit into a chapter meeting. In fact, each time I have given it, I have cut out some material. So many interesting stories and facts had to go! Now the presentation is a much more manageable length, but that came at the expense of some of the little anecdotes that brought the sanctuary story to life. The narrated presentation can be viewed via YouTube, under "Maryland Ornithological Society Sanctuary". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IhSnRpY5X8&t=928s>.

You also coordinate the Jug Bay Bird Christmas Count. What

other projects do you work on outside of MOS?

Yes, I took on the Jug Bay Christmas Bird Count in 2017, when the previous compiler, Sam Droege, had to go out of the country. I like handling numerical data, and this project gives me that experience. I also serve as a volunteer for the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership and MD-DC Audubon, by performing annual bird monitoring at the Parkers Creek Important Bird Area in Calvert County. This involves doing a point count of birds during breeding season, similar to a Breeding Bird Survey route, except that it's done on foot, so one nice aspect is that I get good exercise on some of the challenging trails at Parkers Creek. The objective of the project is to document birds that are breeding at the site, with an emphasis on birds that are threatened or declining. This work allows me to use the song identification skills that I learned from David Holmes when I used to be his note-taker for Breeding Bird Surveys in Cecil County. I added another volunteer position in early 2019, when I joined the board of Friends of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and Patuxent Research Refuge. The Refuge is an incredible resource for our area and for the country as a whole. I think there is opportunity for MOS and the Friends of Patuxent to work together and I hope to foster that.

You've relaunched the Maryland/DC Birding Guide this past January. Tell us about the guide, and the process of building it.

Oh yes, I'm very excited about the new look for what is now called the *Birder's Guide to Maryland & DC*, which has just launched at <https://birdersguidemddc.org/>. Like the *Yellowbook*, the *Birder's Guide* is another great example of all of the pooled knowledge of MOS members being put to use for the good of birds and birders. How it came to be is a long story, over ten years in the making.

In the early 2000s, a lot of states across the country launched birding trail projects to showcase their birding sites, or in some cases, there were ABA books that served as birding guides for a whole state or a portion of a state. By the middle of that decade, some members within MOS were feeling kind of left out because Maryland didn't have a birding trail or birding guide publication of its own. Marcia Balestri (the "other" Marcia) was a very strong proponent of MOS developing a birding guide for Maryland. In 2006, Marcia B became President of MOS, and she didn't feel she could take on the birding guide project. I agreed to chair a committee to start exploring the idea.

We set up a very fine committee and established goals, objectives and a plan of action that were approved by the MOS board. Committee members have rotated on and off, and over the years the committee has included Marcia Balestri, Wayne Bell, Mike Bowen, Sarel Cousins, David Curson, Joan Cwi, Fred Fallon, Mary Anne Fluke, Shirley Ford, Kevin Graff, Maureen Harvey, Barbara Hopkins, Barbara Johnson, the late Mary LaMarca, Peter Lev, Helen Patton, Colin Rees, Kurt Schwarz, John Taylor, and Robin Todd.

It was agreed that the birding guide should publicize MOS to the larger birding community, and also showcase the birding habitats and conservation challenges within the state. An early decision was to include the best birding sites in *every* county in Maryland; we weren't going to simply cherry-pick the best sites in the state

as a whole. We didn't want to leave any counties out, because every county has something unique to offer. We also agreed to include Washington, DC, mostly because it seemed like no other organization would take it on, but also because there has always been a strong connection, historically and socially, between Maryland and DC.

The initial concept was to have both a printed publication on the order of a 100-page booklet, as well as a birding guide website, and the committee developed a budget for both. After looking at examples of birding trail materials from approximately 35 other states, the MOS birding guide committee developed an outline of what we wanted in each site description. The MOS chapters were supplied with a "site nomination form," and Mike Bowen took on the task of keeping track of submissions and organizing them. The committee had a scoring system to prioritize the submissions from the chapters: for example, we would not include birding sites that were not open to the public (duh!) or that were unsafe in some way. We also prioritized parks, hunting areas, sanctuaries and other formally designated areas (that is, recognizable, named places), in preference to roadside birding (for example, pulling up on a road shoulder to scope a farm pond); we thought that roadside birding has several inherent risks that made it less appealing for a project aimed at the public. Nevertheless, the *Birder's Guide* today does have a few selected examples of roadside birding.

So, as time went on, the committee assembled a great collection of birding site descriptions representing almost every county as well as DC. Some counties were still missing or under-represented but we knew that could be addressed later. But there was one important thing lacking, and that was funding. After all this time, I don't remember exactly how much we projected was needed for a print publication and website, but I think that we were talking upwards of \$25K or \$30K. MOS simply did not have that much money to commit to the project. Joan Cwi valiantly took on the task of writing grant requests for outside funding, but the economic downturn of 2008 and the following years made it impossible to find external funding. Without funding, the project stalled for a while, and meanwhile I relocated and took on a more demanding job, and was unable to give any attention to the project.

Around 2010 or 2011, Joan Cwi stepped in to chair the committee, and she made what I believe was a brilliant and strategic decision to abandon the idea of a printed publication and concentrate solely on a website. JB Churchill from the Allegany-Garrett Chapter agreed to set up and run a website. A very spare budget was developed, and JB set up the framework for the site. Joan began the prodigious task of copying in the site descriptions that had been developed with the chapters. Joan and JB did an incredible job building a comprehensive website that presented all of the gathered material in an organized and coherent fashion.

By about 2016, Joan had entered essentially all the available site descriptions on the website (<http://mdbirdingguide.com/>), representing about 175 different locations across the state. Unfortunately, Joan's husband John became critically ill, and Joan could not take on the task of editing for consistency and style and accuracy of details such as entry fees and operating hours. So I stepped back into the project as editor of the website, and I've been working on it ever since.

In addition to the basic editing and cleaning up of details, I've been

using the committee's list of "wanted" birding sites to add more site descriptions, reaching out to solicit information from active local birders that I find through eBird. We now have 192 site descriptions online, with additional drafts in progress.

The website was attacked by malware early in 2019. At that time, MOS officers began wondering if the birding guide website could be redesigned to look and function more like the newly overhauled MOS website. Over the summer of 2019, MOS Webmaster Tom Strickwerda and I developed a new draft layout for the website. We asked the MOS website designer Gabe Seiden of Connect4Consulting to build out the new site and transfer the content from the old site. Gabe has been great to work with: he took our bare bones layout ideas and enhanced them using the latest available technology, while paying great attention to appearance and overall layout.

What are your favorite features of the guide?

I'm excited about the new website because it has some enhanced features that make it fun and easy to use as well as attractive in appearance. The beautiful Baltimore Oriole photo in the top banner of the home page was contributed by Bonnie Ott of the Howard County Bird Club. The colors of the website design are drawn from the colors of the photograph, for a unified appearance. The overall menu layout and navigation looks a lot like that on the MOS website (<https://mdbirds.org/>), so that you immediately feel that the two websites are related. There is extensive MOS branding throughout the new *Birder's Guide* website, to fulfill the original objective of publicizing MOS. The MOS chapters are featured in the footer of every page and are mentioned within the site descriptions for their counties. In addition, there is a live feed from the MOS website that displays upcoming field trips in the footer as well as on a stand-alone calendar page, which can be reached from the top menu.

Birding sites can be explored through an alphabetical list (handy if you know the name of the place you want to visit), or by region, by county, by type (e.g., state parks or hunting areas or local parks, or hiker-biker trails, etc.), by habitat, or by features and amenities. Want to visit a birding site that has a playground for your young children? We've got you covered. Want to bring your dog? You can look that up, too. Want to go to a place where you can launch a boat? Yep, we can help with that. The *Birder's Guide* is designed to be a one-stop shop for people, both local residents and visitors, to explore all the nooks and crannies of birding habitats in Maryland and DC, while serving their other interests and needs.

The conservation theme that was part of the original planning for the project is carried out in several ways. Most of the 42 Audubon-designated Important Bird Areas in Maryland are included, and their IBA designation is noted in the relevant site descriptions. Other sensitive areas, such as state wildlands and natural areas, are also described. The existence of habitat restoration projects and pollinator gardens are called out. Other special areas are noted, such as our three locations that are part of the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. At this time, two MOS sanctuaries are included, but eventually all ten will be represented. The conservation focus is a running theme throughout the text. We want birders to be aware that the birding sites they visit and the birds they find are the intentional result of hard work, planning, and dollars spent, with the underlying message that more can and

should be done.

Although I'm biased, I truly think that the redesigned website is THE best state-level birding guide in the country.

MOS has benefitted immeasurably by your work. How has your volunteer service been rewarding to you?

Simply said, my life would not be the same without MOS. MOS has given me a network of friends throughout the state, as well as a husband! It's wonderful to be married to a man who shares my values and goals. Beyond introducing me to like-minded people,

the MOS Conventions have introduced me to the beautiful places where we can go birding, and visiting these places helps to keep me physically fit. I've always found great peace and relaxation in the outdoors, going back to those early walks with my dad, and my work for MOS in many respects is a way to carry on my father's legacy. My projects for MOS also give me an ongoing outlet for my scientific training as well as for my experience in organization, project management, and publications. I think I would be incredibly bored without MOS in my life!

Hog Island Audubon Scholarship winners for 2020

The Maryland Ornithological Society is happy to announce that it is awarding seven scholarships to the National Audubon Society's Hog Island camp in Maine for the summer of 2020.

The Anne Arundel chapter has two recipients represented. **Kathryn Fuller** is an Outdoor Educator teacher for the Prince George's County schools at the William S. Schmidt Outdoor Environmental Centre and also is an educator volunteer at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Edgewater, Md.

Rick Perry has taught many different science courses at Severna High School since 2004. He is a member of the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center and since taking a course there, has constantly taken his classes outdoors and has helped other teachers do the same.

The Baltimore chapter is sending three educators. **April Hill** is a fourth grade teacher at The Lamb of God School and a co-director of the Nature Camp at Cylburn Arboretum. **Jessica Jeannetta** has worked as an environmental educator and is now a Naturalist at Oregon Ridge Nature Center. **Alison Moore** is currently on sabbatical with Baltimore City Public Schools and part of her professional and self-development plan for this year is to further her knowledge of birds to offer a bird class and club at Highlandtown Elementary/Middle School.

The Howard County bird club has recommended **Erin Eve** who is a Park Ranger in Howard County. She recently worked at Robinson Nature Center and now as a full-time ranger in the county plays an integral role in developing and leading interpretive programs.

Montgomery County bird club is awarding a scholarship to **Stacey Flynn**. Stacey is a media specialist at Greater Seneca Creek Elementary School and has also been a Nature Camp Counselor at Black Hill Nature Center. Stacey has created a "NatureBrary" program at her school which allows students to check out Explorer's backpacks.

Congratulations to these 2020 Hog Island Campers and also to the chapters and colleagues who recommended them.

Anna Urciolo

Chair, MOS Scholarship Committee

Pin Contest

The 2020 annual MOS Convention will take place in Cumberland, Maryland at the Cumberland Ramada May 15 – May 17, 2020. The deadline for the submission of entries for the pin design competition will be February 28, 2020. Competition rules will be sent to all artists who have submitted entries in recent years and they also will appear on the MOS web site.

Briefly:

- The bird must be appropriate to the time of year and for the conference site: Cumberland, Maryland
- It must contain the phrases "MOS" and "2020"
- Entries must be in HARD COPY.

Again, the deadline for the 2020 Pin Design Contest is February 28, 2020, so, artists, start thinking NOW about birds that can be found during the spring in the Western Maryland.



CALENDAR

2/12/2020	8 AM – 12 PM	Birding Governors Bridge Natural Area	Host: Anne Arundel Bird Club. Contact Chris Barry, 410-897-7216 or rparr00@aacounty.org. Description: Located on the bank of the Patuxent River and operated as part of the Patuxent River Park. Trails criss-cross the park, allowing a walk through all the different habitats.
2/15/2020	7:30 AM – 12 PM	Birding at Governor Bridge Natural Area	Host: Patuxent Bird Club/PGAS Contact Bill Sefton at kiwisuits@msn.com. Description: Monthly walk. Meet at the Natural Area parking lot on the south side of Governor Bridge Rd., 1 mile east of Route 301. No reservations needed.
2/15/20	8 – 11 AM	Loch Raven Point and Loch Raven Dam birding.	Host: Baltimore Bird Club Leader: Debbie Terry, 443-578-8243 or dterry12@verizon.net and Kevin Graff, keyweststyle2001@gmail.com. Description: Morning trip to see ducks, grebes, coots, and other water birds. Meet at Loch Raven Point (public area on Loch Raven Drive, just west of Bridge #1). Our second stop will be Loch Raven Dam. Scopes useful. Trip canceled in snow, rain, or slippery conditions. RSVP required in case trip is canceled.
2/15/2020	8 AM – 11 AM	Birding at Blandair Park North	Host: Howard County Bird Club. Leader Anthony VanSchoor, tonyvanschoor@gmail.com. Description: Walk the trails along scrubland and woods. Sometimes non-winter birds over-winter here. No facilities, boots recommended. Meet at the south end of Summer Hollow Ln, Columbia.
2/15/20	8 AM – 12 PM	Saturday Morning Monitoring Walk at Fort McHenry	Host: Baltimore Bird Club Leader Bob Poscover, 410-882-1309. Alternate contact Wendy Alexander, 443-204-3754. Description: Continuing survey of bird activity at the Fort. Telescopes useful. Canceled in bad weather. Meet outside of park front gates and park at lot on left hand side.
2/15/2020	8 AM – 12 PM	Birding at Piney Run Park	Host: Carroll County Bird Club Leaders Dave and Maureen Harvey, 410-795-3117. Description: Moderate walking around the lake. Meet at the parking lot outside the gate to Piney Run Park on Martz Road off of White Rock Road.
2/15/2020	8 AM – 5:30 PM	Dorchester County Bird Hunt	Host: YMOS. Contact George Radcliffe, radclifg@gmail.com, at least 2 weeks in advance. Description: Meet at 8 AM at the Visitor's Center in Cambridge. We'll spend time looking at the large array of ducks, before heading south in the county to Blackwater Refuge and Shorter's Wharf to look for Short-eared Owls and the Rough-legged Hawk. Bring a lunch and money for dinner and plenty of warm clothing.
2/15/2020	9 – 11 AM	Fred Archibald Nature Walk	Host: Audubon Society of Central Maryland. For more information contact Crystal Kunst, hckunst@qis.net or 443-536-3071. Description: Bi-monthly naturalist-led walk.
2/15/2020	9 AM – 12 PM	Searching for Winter Waterfowl	Host: Washington County Bird Club. Contact Doris Berger, 301-739-8907. Description: Half-day trip in search of winter waterfowl. We will stop at locations along the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. Leave from the MVA parking lot, 18306 Col. Henry K. Douglas Drive
2/15/2020	10 AM – 12 PM	Bird Walk on the Great Allegany Passage	Host: Allegany/Garrett Bird Club Contact Raquel Ketterman, raquelketterman@verizon.net or 301-256-6746, Bird walk on the Great Allegany Passage (GAP) Trail to count birds for the Great Backyard Bird Count. All are welcome and information on counting birds for the bird count will be explained for beginning birders. Meet at the Frostburg Trailhead at New Hope Rd. Dress warm and boots recommended.
2/15-17/20	All Day	Eastern Shore Weekend	Host: Frederick Bird Club Leader: Tom Humphrey (240-793-2508). Description: A casual and fun trip to visit some of the best birding spots on the east coast.
2/16/2020	All Day	Birding Ocean City and Environs	Host: Talbot Bird Club Leader Wayne Bell, 410-820-6002 or wbell2@washcoll.edu. Description: Expect lots of sea birds, gulls, waterfowl and field birds on this trip. Depart Easton Acme at 6:30 am OR meet leader at the Ocean City Inlet, south jetty parking lot at 8 am. Bring lunch. Soup and warmth will be provided around noon at the leader's condo apartment on 76th St. overlooking the beach.
2/20/2020	3 – 5 PM	Birding at Lake Artemesia	Host: Patuxent Bird Club/PGAS Contact David Mozurkewich (mozurk@bellAtlantic.net) for more information. Description: Semi-monthly walk. Wheelchair-accessible. Meet at 3 pm at parking lot at intersection of Berwyn Rd. and Ballew Ave. in Berwyn Heights. No reservations needed.

For more details about an event listed in the MOS Calendar, please visit: <https://mdbirds.org/calendar/>.

BIRDING



2/22/2020	All Day	Field Trip to Blackwater NWR	Host: Kent County Bird Club. If you have questions, please contact leaders Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568, e-mail: borealdee@gmail.com. Description: Prime waterfowl and eagle country; pelicans and other surprises? Full day. Dress warmly & bring lunch. Meet at 8 AM at the "Dollar General" parking lot (off Philosopher's Terrace) in Chestertown.
2/22/20	7:30 AM – 2:30 PM	Winter Waterfowl at North Beach/ Herrington Harbour.	Host: Baltimore Bird Club Leader: Kevin Graff, keyweststyle2001@gmail.com. Description: A 3/4 day trip south along border of Calvert and Anne Arundel Counties to spot waterfowl at North Beach Marsh, North Beach Boardwalk, Chesapeake Beach Railway Trail, and Herrington Harbour. We'll also look for winter residents such as sparrows, and raptors. Optional lunch at local restaurant. Telescopes useful. Meet at Nursery Rd/Hammond Ferry Rd P&R for car-pooling. Canceled if high winds, snow. Contact leader for more info.
2/22/20	8 – 9:30 AM	Birding at Druid Hill Park	Host: Baltimore Bird Club, Audubon and Maryland Zoo. To borrow binoculars, contact Patterson Park Audubon Center at 410-558-2473 or baltimore@audubon.org. Description: Join Audubon and the Maryland Zoo to explore this leafy city park! From forest to lake, a variety of bird species await. Meet at 3001 East Drive to start the walk.
2/22/20	8 AM – 12 PM	Trip to Pickering Creek	Host: Talbot Bird Club Leader Dave Bent, 410-822-2113 or bentd72@gmail.com. Description: With a diversity of habitat, expect lots of waterfowl, sparrows, and forest birds, and possibly even a Golden Eagle. Breakfast hosted by Bobbie Wells, 410-924-2568 or wellsbk@yahoo.com, 9651 Unionville Rd, Easton. Meet at Pickering Creek at 8 am.
2/22/20	9 – 11 AM	Bird Walk on the C&O Canal	Host: Allegany/Garrett Bird Club Contact Melissa Hensel, mjhsensel@yahoo.com or 240-362-1086. Hike along the C&O Canal looking for waterfowl on the Potomac and to check on Bald Eagle nest activity. Meet at the C&O Canal Terminus. Dress warm-there is often a strong wind along this hike and waterproof boots may be necessary.
2/22/2020	9:30 AM and 1 PM	How to Find an Owl	Host: Howard County Bird Club. Leader Jay Sheppard, jaymsheppard95@gmail.com (preferred) or 301-725-5559. Description: Two sessions, at 9:30 am and 1 pm. Possibility of birding at dusk for owls and early woodcocks for those in afternoon group. Learn how to find owls by habitat and signs. Contact Jay to sign up so participants can be advised of weather-related changes and where to meet. Group size limited and RSVP required. No facilities.
2/25/2020		Birding at Black Hills Reservoir	Host: Frederick Bird Club Contact leader Kathy Calvert (301-810-5677) for meeting time and location. Description: Bald Eagles and over-wintering waterfowl.
2/26/2020	8 – 11 AM	Birding at Beverly Triton Beach Park	Host: Anne Arundel Bird Club. Contact Alan Young, 410-991-8300 or alnmyoung@aol.com. Description: Join Ranger Karen Jarbo and Lloyd Lewis as we will hike through a variety of habitats, including bay shoreline, large freshwater lakes, woods, fields and marshes.
2/29/20	8 – 9:30 AM	Birding at Patterson Park	Host: Baltimore Bird Club and Audubon. For directions or to borrow binoculars, contact Patterson Park Audubon Center at 410-558-2473 or baltimore@audubon.org. Description: Join Audubon to explore this urban oasis in Southeast Baltimore. With more than 205 species on record, the park is full of surprises. Meet at the fountain, near intersection of East Lombard St and Patterson Park Ave.
2/29/2020	8 AM – 12 PM	Birding at Swan Harbor Farm Park	Host: Harford Bird Club. Leader Dave Webb (410-939-3537; porzana@comcast.net). Description: Visit this Harford County gem with its commanding view of the bay and explore the three impoundments, wooded trails and open fields. The farm, with its varied habitat, has developed into a fine location for a broad spectrum of birdlife, including waterfowl, marsh specialties, raptors and sparrows. Meet at the Agricultural Education Center parking lot.
3/1/2020	6:30 AM – 12 PM	Birding Western Talbot Landings and Change Point Farm	Host: Talbot Bird Club Leader Jeff Effinger, 410-443-5016 or jkeffinger55@gmail.com. Description: Explore nearby landings in search of waterfowl, loons, grebes, and gulls. Explore nearby landings in search of waterfowl, loons, grebes, and gulls. Depart Easton Acme at 6:30 am.
3/1/2020	8 AM – 12 PM	Birding at Chesapeake Farms	Host: Kent County Bird Club. If you have questions, please contact leaders Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin, 410-778-9568, e-mail: borealdee@gmail.com. Description: Wintering waterfowl, raptors (notably eagles), White-crowned and other sparrows. Half day, bring snacks. Meet at 8 AM at the "Dollar General" parking lot (off Philosopher's Terrace) in Chestertown.



BIRDING

3/1/2020	8 AM – 11 AM	Birding at Centennial Park	Host: Howard County Bird Club. Leaders Richard and Renee Peters, richard@rrrrpeters.org. Description: Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Facilities available. Waterfowl expected early migrant passerines possible. Handicap accessible. Meet at west end parking lot.
3/1/2020		Woodcock Watch	Host: Frederick Bird Club Leader David Smith (443-995-4108). Description: Sign up for the email list to be notified of the actual date (weather-dependent). Evening outing. Location TBD.
3/4/2020	4:30 – 7 PM	Informal Late Afternoon Bird Walk	Host: Montgomery Bird Club For more info call leader Jim Green, 301-742-0036, Description: Joint trip with ANS. We'll be checking out the Potomac River, Hughes Hollow and American Woodcock display if they are in the vicinity. Bring scope, flashlight and wear "muddy conditions" footwear. Reservations are not required - all are welcome. Meet promptly at 4:30 pm at the end of Seneca Rd at Riley's Lock "on the bridge."
3/4/2020	6 PM – 8 PM	Timberdoodle Hunt	Host: Harford Bird Club. Leaders Tom Gibson (410-734-4135 or gibsonld@aol.com) and Jane Scocca (410-272-8870 or jane@scocca.org). Description: Meet at the I-95/155 Park and Ride. From there the guides will lead this evening trip to a well-known site for Woodcocks, one of our most interesting and elusive birds. Hopefully you will see the fascinating Woodcock sky dance mating display as well as hear their distinctive call notes.
3/8/2020	7 AM – 12 PM	Birding at the Easton Wastewater Treatment Plant	Host: Talbot Bird Club Leader Paul Thut, 410-745-6657 or pthut@gmail.com. Description: The nearby WWTP is an ideal place for waterfowl, gulls, raptors and land birds. We may also hear about plans to restore certain areas of the WWTP for Black Rail habitat. Breakfast: Hosted by Fred and Bettye Maki, 248-225-0724 or bjmakio4@gmail.com, 7448 Jeffrey's Way, Easton. Depart Easton Acme at 7 am.
3/8/2020	8 – 11 AM	Birding at Centennial Park	Host: Howard County Bird Club. Leaders Richard and Renee Peters, richard@rrrrpeters.org. Description: Easy walking around the lake on paved path. Facilities available. Waterfowl expected early migrant passerines possible. Handicap accessible. Meet at west end parking lot.
3/8/2020	6 – 8 PM	Pickering Creek: Woodcock Search	Host: Talbot Bird Club Leader Ron Ketter, 707-373-5532 or rgketter@gmail.com. Description: This evening trip focuses on the flight of the Timberdoodle, aka the American Woodcock. We'll assemble before sunset in hopes of hearing and seeing woodcocks (and perhaps an owl or two) as they do their magic dances as the light fades from the sky. Meet at Pickering Creek at 6 pm.

MEETINGS

2/10/20	7 – 9 PM	Easton YMCA Multipurpose Room, 202 Peachblossom Rd	Host: Talbot Bird Club Description: Our guest speaker will be Brian Prendergast talking on "Protection from Insect-borne Diseases and West Nile Virus Effects on Birds and People".
2/11/2020	7 – 9 PM	College Park Airport Operations Building, 2nd floor	Host: Patuxent Bird Club/PGAS. Description: "Duck Stamp History and Importance to Conservation" presented by Suzanne Fellows.
2/11/20	7 – 8:30 PM	Frostburg State University, Room TBD	Host: Allegany/Garrett Bird Club. Contact Raquel Ketterman at raquelketterman@verizon.net or 301-268-6746. Katie Fallon will speak on her book "Vulture - The Private Life of an Unloved Bird."
2/13/2020	7 – 9 PM	Robinson Nature Center	Host: Howard County Bird Club. Description: Bonnie Ott will speak on Habitat Birdiing.
2/15/2020	12 – 2 PM	Blue Heron Center, Quiet Waters Park	Host: Anne Arundel Bird Club. Contact Pamela Kellett, 443-534-6938 or coordinator@marylandbirds.org. Description: "Gardening for Birds" with Virgil Davis.
2/19/2020	7:30 - 9 PM	Potomac Presbyterian Church	Host: Montgomery Bird Club. Description: David Curson on Audubon MD-DC's Salt Marsh and Coastal Resilience Work.



2/20/2020	7:30 - 9 PM	Caroline County Public Library	Host: Caroline Bird Club. Description: Gabriel Foley on "Getting Involved with Maryland and DC Breeding Bird Atlas 3"
2/23/20	12 - 4 PM	Cylburn Arboretum, Vollmer Center	Host: Baltimore Bird Club. For information contact Kevin Graff at keyweststyle2001@gmail.com, or Mark Linardi at 443-834-8413. Description: 75th Anniversary Covered Dish Dinner. Our main speaker is Hank Kaestner, presenting "The Jewels of Ecuador." To reserve a place and tell us what you will bring, please use the website PerfectPotluck.com.
2/24/2020	7 - 9:30 PM	MAC Education Center	Host: Tri-county Bird Club. Contact Ellen Lawler, 410-982-8695 or emlawler534@comcast.net. Description: "Acoustic Monitoring of Nassawango Creek Preserve-Implications for Management and Birding Hotspots" presented by Gabe Cahalan, Conservation Steward, The Nature Conservancy.
2/25/2020	7 - 9 PM	Mt. Aetna Nature Center	Host: Washington County Bird Club. Call 301-797-8454 for further information. Description: film "Big Birds Can't Fly".
3/4/2020	7 - 10 PM	Carroll Nonprofit Center	Host: Carroll County Bird Club. Contact CJ McAuliffe at cjhome@wildblue.net. Description: "Rise and Fall of Northern Goshawks in the Central Appalachians: Is there reason for conservation concern?" by David Brinker.
3/5/2020	7 - 9 PM	Homewood at Crumland Farms.	Host: Frederick Bird Club. Description: Gail MacKiernan will tell us about birding in Madagascar.
3/6/2020	7 - 9 PM	Churchville Presbyterian Church	Host: Harford Bird Club. Description: Program TBA.
3/7/2020	10 AM - 12 PM	Easton Presbyterian Church	Host: Talbot Bird Club. Contact Bettye Maki, 248-225-0724 or bjmaki04@gmail.com. Description: MOS Board Meeting. Volunteer contributions for brunch foods are requested.
3/9/2020	7 - 9 PM	Easton YMCA Multipurpose Room, 202 Peachblossom Rd	Host: Talbot Bird Club. Description: Dr. Wayne Bell and Ron Ketter will speak on "30% Fewer Birds in North America: What does that Mean for Talbot County and the Eastern Shore?"
3/10/20	7 - 8:30 PM	Frostburg State University, Room TBD	Host: Allegany/Garrett Bird Club. Contact Raquel Ketterman at raquelketterman@verizon.net or 301-268-6746. Description: Clair Nemes, will present the results of her research on "Population Ecology of Bird and Free Roaming Domestic Cats".

Yet Another Adventure?

Northern Minnesota was the place to be in January with the MOS-sponsored trip consisting of Scott Young and Evelyn Ralston (Montgomery), David Sandler (Howard), Ken Drier and Maryanne Dolan (Cecil) and Ben Glick (a stray from Florida) under the able tutelage of Josh Engel, Red Hill Birding. Josh got us great views of some 42 species overall. Notables were Northern Goshawk; Ruffed, Spruce, and Sharp-tailed Grouse; Black-backed and Three-toed woodpeckers; Boreal Chickadee; and Evening Grosbeak. The trip culminated with a 5-owl day (Great Gray, Boreal, Snowy, Northern Hawk Owl, and Barred). High fives all around! Northern Minnesota in winter. A great place to bird.

Have you joined an MOS-sponsored trip? They are great fun. Yucatan is scheduled for November of 2020, while Trinidad and the Leatherback turtle nesting sites are again on the agenda for April 2021. Panama is also being set for the spring of 2021 and maybe Montana for June of 2021. Contact Maryanne Dolan (Maryanne.dolan@gmail.com) for details.

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